

Commander's Notes

Happy Valentine's Day Steel Spike Family!

Since it's that sappy time of the year, I decided to share a small piece of me. This time of year brings many celebrations for Team Anderson – my son's 9th Birthday just passed, my husband's Birthday is the day after, and our 15th Anniversary just passed. I wasn't there physically, but I was there in the ways that I could conjure from Iraq. I sent cards, e-mails and called at the first opportunity. My daughter's 5th birthday is on the horizon and I'll do my best to share in her celebration too. My husband sent me a card that ended with "wish you were home, but I understand."

That left me feeling WOW (WithOut Words). That came from a husband that understands. He understands my passion for the Army and Soldiers. He knows me and my spirit. He probably doesn't realize it, but his words give me permission to freely serve in this foreign place. He can safely give me that permission because he shares the same spirit. He knows my passion for the Army and Soldiers in no way takes away from the love I have for Team Anderson. He knows this because he shares the same passions for the Army and Soldiers. That's one of the benefits of being married to another Soldier. We honestly believe that our service to the Army and in Iraq will benefit Team Anderson in the long term. Some people go an entire lifetime trying to figure out where they will make their mark.

Well, the Steel Spike Soldiers are making their mark right now and right here in Iraq. I often talk to Soldiers about our service here. I remind them to put self aside for a moment and think about the bigger picture of what their service in Iraq means. We are in a position to form our own legacies - here and now. Some portion of our legacy will speak to how we were part of transitioning authority back to the Iraqi people. But, I challenge them to form their individual contributions now. We have to think now about the stories we will share with our kids and grandkids 20 or 30 years from now when we're crowded around the fireplace. What a thought.

Although my husband understands, I can't and don't take that for granted. I don't think for one moment that my children share that same deep understanding – they're too young and they miss Mommy. That's why I work hard to ensure that my service over here isn't for naught. I have no choice, but to serve proudly. What will I tell them if I don't?

I share these thoughts to help the families at home understand why we serve the way we serve and to help the Steel Spike Soldiers understand the importance of forging their legacies.

Until next time...

Sergeant Major's Notes

The Soldiers of the Steel Spike Battalion have continued to stay very busy in support of the units' mission. They have had to battle rain and plenty of mud during the last month as well as some rather cold temperatures. Despite the bad weather they have

been able to press ahead building and maintaining in some harsh conditions. They are simply awesome!

We were able to conduct an NCO Induction Ceremony and welcome thirteen of the Battalion's newest and finest Non Commissioned Officers into the Corps. We also have 11 Soldiers that have been recommended for promotion to Sergeant and 4 to Staff Sergeant, as well as 15 soldiers who have reenlisted during the deployment. We have another 25 to go and the list seems to keep growing.

We are working hard to keep the environmental leave program on track. The goal is to allow every soldier the opportunity to take a well deserved break.

Once again I want to thank the FRG leaders for all their hard work in supporting us and our families and ask that you support them.

Spike 7,
CSM Thibodeau

XO, Logistics

Dear family and friends, we have been receiving your letters and packages regularly and please keep them coming. Now that the holidays are over our mailroom has been very slow and my postal clerks, SGT Carter and SPC Cummings, are under worked. They should be some of the busiest Soldiers in the battalion. We have gone from daily truck loads of mail to a couple of wheelbarrows of mail per week.

The winds are beginning to shift and the battalion has completed its first two Iraqi Security Force Camps. Slowly and steadily your Soldiers are assisting the Iraqis assume physical control of their country. However, as noted in the January 24th Stars and Stripe article, there are some cultural differences that must be overcome in order to provide our customers the facilities they desire. That is sometimes difficult, but always surmountable.

As a construction battalion we always focus on what our Soldiers are building for others and rarely focus on those Soldiers who keep the unit rolling. Our Direct Support Maintenance Shop is just such a group. Always working outside of the limelight, but ever present; many a late night have been spent in their corrugated steel building repairing a broken bulldozer or road grader. They are some of our quiet professionals who keep our engineers building. Warrant Officer Skinner and Staff Sergeant Evens lead the DSU shop and to date they have repaired several pieces of heavy equipment. Additionally, the DSU Team has become actively engaged in maintenance operations for all missions. Our Tactical Movement Teams will roll onto the desert far from their FOB and the DSU springs into action. Mr. Skinner's work with the precision of a NASCAR pit crew while the TMT crew gets some well deserved down time. It is the Soldiers of the DSU shop who enable the battalion to remain in the winner's circle.

MAJ Lahood
Executive Officer

S-3, Operations

Greetings once again from Rainy Iraq! That's right, we've had several inches of rain and near freezing temperatures since my last opportunity to address you but that hasn't deterred your Steel Spike Soldiers from continuing to push forward on dozens of missions across the entire Area of Operations (AO). We just entered what I call "the doldrums" – the period when you feel like you've been here a long time but still have way too far to go!

As usual, we continue to accomplish all of our missions with safety at the forefront. Since I've talked about this goal several times, allow me to give you an indication of how we are doing toward achieving that goal:

We had two rather exciting missions this month that we were forced to execute with almost no advance warning. These missions were truly a model of inter-service cooperation as everyone brought their expertise to the forefront to complete a tough mission in a bad part of town.

Some of our missions from last month continue and we will begin some new ones. The soldiers of HSC are continuing to produce concrete for almost a dozen different projects while simultaneously striving to complete a new wastewater treatment pond for Camp Ramadi's Soldiers, sailors and Marines. Bravo Company is doing some major concrete work on two nearby bases as part of preparations to turn those bases back over to the Iraqi Police and Military. Bravo also has a project to build a large woodframe conference building on Ramadi and their heavy equipment personnel continue on a number of missions. The 913th CSE company continued mission support from Bravo company. The remainder of the company is split with a portion co-located near battalion headquarters where they are working on a major road. Both these projects will continue through the next month. Alpha Company finished up work at COP South near the town of Al Qaim – a huge success story as 800 ISF moved in! They are now moving on to execute an almost identical project.

If we are to re-locate any units the Commander will pass that information on to you as soon as allowable but for right now there is no change to unit locations or our tour length.

Thanks for all your support back there – your Steel Spike Soldiers have done great things and have many big days ahead. Until next time,

Hooah! And STEEL SPIKE!

PAYNE
MAJ, EN
S-3 Operations Officer

913th CSE Company

January was another busy month for the 913th Engineer Company. We dispersed even further to all corners of our area of operations. 2ND Platoon lead by 2LT Grimco and SFC Collins continue to make progress on our mission despite the unusually poor weather and occasionally unfriendly situation. 2LT Jones and SSG Pearson have their hands full with a great engineer project for most of 3rd Platoon, while other platoon members keep busy hauling construction material for missions throughout the area. 1LT

Dye and SFC Street stood up a convoy escort team after long hours of training on their own, intense training back in Kuwait for over a week, and extensive ride along training with similar teams. 1st Platoon is trained and confident in their new mission that has them working outside the realm of our typical engineer projects. Overall, our moral remains at a relatively high level. As we remain busy, we ask that our families back home continue to be understanding regarding your soldiers contacting you. Communication with family members remains one of my top priorities, so you can feel confident that 1SG Taylor and I will continue to ensure your soldiers are able to keep in touch on a regular basis.

By CPT Roberts and SPC Doupis
913th EN CO (CSE)

HSC, 46th ECB

Greetings from HSC. We had a busy January and are starting to see the fruits of our labor in the form of finished projects and synchronized systems. This month Equipment Platoon completed placement of a large scale concrete foundation for a new medical facility and has already moved on to take over the mission to build a wastewater evaporation pond for Camp Ramadi. Our mechanics continue their endless battle to keep equipment running with a positive attitude that is a daily inspiration. The staff, company headquarters, and our Tactical Movement Team, with drivers from EQ, completed the first Logistics Package (LOGPAC) push to northern FOBs in support of A CO and 913th CSE. The flow of supplies, equipment, and Soldiers is a complex and ongoing operation that is only successful with everyone's cooperation. Whether on the road or working in the wings, we all work together to make things happen and HSC is growing as a team.

This month we welcome the following Soldiers into theatre and into HSC:

1LT Dues (from A CO)
1LT Ezekannagha (from A CO)
PV2 Morrow
SPC Martin
PV2 Papke
2LT Stiffey
2LT Turley

We were fortunate to be able to promote the following Soldiers this month:

CPT Dennard
SSG Hammond
SGT Martinez
SPC Angel
SPC Davis, Christopher
SPC Steel
SPC Sales
PFC Burdette
PFC Shramm

The following Soldiers also chose to re-enlist this month and should be recognized for their continued commitment to Army service:

SGT Rusinger
SGT Patterson
SPC Martin
SPC Ferrell

As always, thanks for your love and support back home. "ROCK STEADY! ROCK HARD!"

Happy Valentine's Day,
CPT Torres and 1SG Vasquez

A Co., 46th ECB

"Happy Valentines Day"

Hello again Gator Family, as the sun sets over COP South our mission there is complete, two months in less than great conditions served as a reminder of why we are here and the satisfaction of a job well done. With our first two missions complete it was time for some well deserved down time. Although short lived the Gator team welcomed the chance to complete some maintenance on equipment wrap up accountability and sleep in their beds.

We also welcomed three new members to the Gator family, LT's Kolb, Joles and Wooster joined the team running. The "refit" period allowed them to get more familiar with the Company and their platoons. This also means we had to say good bye to some of the family, LT's Ezekannagha, Louck, and Dues. We wish them well in future endeavors, and remind them "once a Gator, always a Gator".

Our next mission will give us yet another taste of Iraq. The Company Task Force has moved to us to a new location with new missions. The move north will leave the Company split apart once again, with 2nd and EM platoons assisted by MNT and 1st completing the mission. The remaining elements will continue to support the missions at TQ and other locations around the Area of Operations (AO).

The weather here has been challenging over the past several weeks, with larger than normal amounts of rain and blustery winds mixed with plenty of dust. It has caused delays in movements hindering convoys and projects.

We must close with a warm and heartfelt wish for "Happy Valentines Day" our thoughts are always at home with you. The continued support through mail and care packages does wonder for the Soldiers' morale. It is never ending joy to see the faces when its mail time. Remember those "Any Soldier" letters and packages go a long way for single Soldiers.

Thank you,
CPT Dallas and 1SG Lantz
Cajun (Gator) 6 & 7

B Co., 46th ECB

Dear Friends and Families of the Beast,
10 Feb 06

January has come and gone here in Iraq, and February promises to be just as busy for Bravo Company. The weather has been pretty rainy in the last few weeks, which has made conditions muddy and difficult to conduct construction. But the different elements of Bravo Company, despite setbacks in weather, continue to make great strides in their missions of supporting the ongoing Operation Iraqi Freedom.

EM has been super busy, as they received a mission to create a bypass road around a sabotaged bridge in Western Iraq. EM has spent over two weeks living in difficult conditions, which includes battling rainy, cold weather and living in a tent right near their project site. But their progress has been nothing short of remarkable, completing their work ahead of schedule.

2nd Platoon, led by LT Boyle and SFC Boozer, continues to be multi tasked, with Soldiers spread over several project sites in their support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. A squad from 2nd platoon continues to work on their concrete pad project, and should be complete soon.

1st platoon has been re-assigned to doing construction projects, and will no longer be escorting convoys around Iraq. This is a much needed change for Beast, as 1st Platoon has some of the most experienced and knowledgeable Soldiers who are invaluable in their knowledge of construction. They are hitting the ground running, soon to begin a mission of building numerous SWA huts (plywood buildings).

All the Soldiers of Beast miss you, our families, more than we can say. Numerous Soldiers from the Beast have taken leave back to the States since we've arrived here in Iraq, and it is quite an awesome program that allows us to return to you for a couple weeks of relaxation and recuperation!! Thanks for your prayers, thoughts and constant letters and packages that remind us why and who we are fighting in this War on Terror.

CPT Himes and 1SG Scullion

Chaplain's Corner

This month I want to address my part of the newsletter to the parents of our soldiers. If you are reading this and one of your kids is in the 46th, I salute you.

The other day one of our soldiers asked me how old I was. I didn't mind him asking, but was curious as to why he wanted to know. He said he heard I had been married for over 19 years and he was trying to guess my age. He figured he might as well just ask me. So I told him. He told me that I didn't look that old, and I was glad. But later he asked, "how my first deployment was -- back during the civil war." Smart alec! We did have a good laugh though.

Truth is, I am one of the old men in the unit. I was on active duty before many of our soldiers were even born. I hate to admit it, but I guess I am getting old. I am only 42 and I can still kick pretty high, just not as high as I used to. I cannot run as fast as I used to either. When I was an eighteen year old PVT I could easily go two days without sleep, now I can't go two days without a nap. And something happened to that enzyme I used to have that could digest steel BB's, now I can't digest anything. I wake up sore every morning and wonder what I did while I was sleeping. I snore a little now too and that is

embarrassing. These days I'd rather have a hot bath than a hot date. I actually like Shredded Wheat. I no longer like loud music and now when I am in the mall and see a pretty girl, I think her mother is prettier than she is. Yep, things change. I am well on my way to being old. It is just the way of life.

But actually, I am glad I am old enough to be parents to so many of these soldiers. It gives me the unique and awesome privilege of loving them as if they were my own kids. I was once told by an old crusty chaplain that I was not here to love the soldiers. I think he was dead wrong... but even if he was right, I cannot help it. I do care a great deal for them all.

I have so much respect, admiration, and pride in our soldiers it does feel at times they are my own kids, or at least little brothers and sisters. They have shown such an amazing amount of loyalty, integrity, heroism, dedication, and selflessness during this deployment that my heart is swollen with pride. I am happy to be here with these fine young Americans. Just being part of their lives is an honor. I'm proud to be chaplain of the 46th.

To all you parents, perhaps like many parents you sometimes wonder if you did a good job of raising your kids. Well, I am here to tell you that you do not have to worry about that ... your sons and daughters are living proof that you instilled something in them that millions of others do not have, namely, a willingness to risk their lives so that someone else can be free. That is all the proof you need.

I sometimes feel like hiding from you the fact that what they are doing is dangerous. I sometimes think it would be best if you thought they were on some cushy post watching television and going to the PX. But that is not how it is here. Some of our soldiers are conducting operations at desolate outposts. Some are on the road a lot. Others live and work here on our base camp - right outside of one of the most dangerous cities in the world. But do our soldiers duck and hide and only do those things that have little or no risk. No way! They know what they are here to do and are willing to do it regardless of the cost. They know full well that just over the berm and razor wire is a helpless people who are poor, scared, and wishing like crazy they could be free. Your sons and daughters are here to help make that happen and I am so proud of them I want to pop a button on my uniform.

So keep them in your prayers. As leaders we equip them with everything they need to be successful on every mission. But we need your help. So please, keep up the love and support. The cards, letters, emails, and care packages mean more than you know. And if they don't say thank you or write back right away, it is not because they not grateful, it means they are busy working to make these people free.

Without sons and daughters like yours, this would all fail. I love your kids and am very proud of them... I know you do too, and I am thankful. Thank you for sharing your kids with me. I will try to do as good of a job with them as you did.

God bless you all.

Until next time... keep the faith baby, not the baby faith!

Chaplain Temkin